

Cultural participation in Flanders: Testing the cultural omnivore thesis with population data

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Abstract

In this article, we use the ‘post-Bourdieu’ debate on cultural omnivores as the overall framework for an exploration of patterns in cultural participation within Flanders. The data stem from the 2002 and 2003 survey of the Department for Planning and Statistics of the Flemish government. Latent Class Analysis yielded a six-cluster solution as the optimum. These six different patterns of cultural participation can be placed in three groups of two clusters each on the basis of the frequency and the mode of participation. The frequency of participation increases with the level of education, whereas the mode of participation varies with the age variable. If the older clusters are culturally active, they almost exclusively tend towards the fine arts, whereas the younger clusters are not only oriented towards high culture but also show a marked interest for different forms of popular culture. Combined with the difference in frequency in cultural participation, we therefore distinguish within the younger clusters ‘omnivore incidental art participants’ (moderate educational level) from ‘omnivore art participants’ (high educational level).

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1. Introduction: the ‘post-Bourdieu debate’

Notwithstanding Pierre Bourdieu’s undeniable importance for sociology in general and the sociology of culture in particular, it is questionable whether his theoretical framework

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still corresponds to contemporary social reality (for critical appraisals, see inter alia Bouveresse and Roche, 2004; Laermans, 2002b; Lahire, 1999; Noble and Watkins, 2003; Pinto et al., 2004; Verdaasdonk, 2003; Verdaasdonk and Zolberg, 2003). More particularly, empirical doubts have been raised regarding Bourdieu's claim that the bourgeoisie or dominant class primarily affirms its high social status via the public and private consumption of so-called high or legitimate culture, in which the sphere of the fine arts is a central ingredient. According to Bourdieu (1984 [1979], 1989), those who possess much economic and/or cultural capital are not art lovers because they want to distinguish themselves in a conscious way from the other social strata. In his magnum opus *Distinction*, Bourdieu argues at length that class-bound tastes and lifestyles externalize an unconscious habitus or ensemble of unconscious inclinations and dispositions, which is acquired during primary socialization and is mostly confirmed during one's official school trajectory. The actual cultural preferences of the dominant class point to the existence of a shared aesthetic habitus, a shared inclination to negate 'the functional' in favour of 'the refined' and 'the beautiful' or, more generally, formal qualities. In Bourdieu's view, this necessarily goes hand in hand with an aversion from the different forms of popular or illegitimate culture.

Empirical research does not seem to support Bourdieu's thesis concerning an overall homology between so-called high culture and high social status. The amount of economic capital is hardly a significant factor in the participation in high cultural activities, irrespective of the specific operational definition of economic capital (professional status, net income and material wealth) or the context in which it is measured (family of origin or the present family of respondents) (see, for instance, Ganzeboom et al., 1987; Ganzeboom, 1989; Kraaykamp and de Graaf, 1995; Nagel, 2004; Van Eijck, 1998). On the contrary, the amount of cultural capital, which consists of the parental cultural influence as well as the individual's own schooling trajectory, turns out to influence the participation in legitimate culture to a very large extent (e.g., De Graaf and Ganzeboom, 1990; De Graaf et al., 2000; De Haan and Knulst, 2000; Ganzeboom and de Graaf, 1991a,b; Van Eijck, 1997a,b; Voorpostel and van der Lippe, 2001). Yet, these very same studies also show that not all wealthy or highly educated people, or their children, have a manifest interest in arts. These and related findings suggest that not only his data, but also Bourdieu's overall argument in *Distinction* are too exclusively linked up with the socio-cultural reality of mid-1960s France, which has been transformed drastically in the meantime. Indeed, researchers in France as well as in other countries have hardly ever succeeded in representing social reality in a similar way (compare Bennett et al., 1999; Coulangeon, 2003; Fabiani, 2003; Galland, 2003; Lamont and Lareau, 1988; Pedler and Ethis, 1999). For that matter, Bernard Lahire (2004) has even argued that the data Bourdieu used in *Distinction* actually show a much more diversified cultural climate in France, with class divisions that are not so strict as Bourdieu believed.

The recent empirical line of research opened up by Richard Peterson has clearly demonstrated that the present socio-cultural reality indeed differs from the one depicted in *Distinction*. In his test of the relationship between status hierarchy and cultural taste in the U.S., Peterson found that the members of the highest professional status groups were oriented not only towards serious music but also towards more popular genres (Peterson and Simkus, 1992; Peterson, 1993; Peterson and Kern, 1996). Instead of a high degree of aesthetic exclusivity, the higher status groups displayed a broad cultural taste pattern,

whereas the lower status groups were oriented towards only one or a limited number of mostly popular aesthetic traditions. Therefore, Peterson labelled the higher status groups as ‘omnivorous’ and the lower status groups as ‘univorous’. Peterson’s findings from the early 1990s gave a new impetus to the empirical study of cultural participation and cultural taste (compare Van Eijck, 2000). Meanwhile, several researchers have tried, with varying degrees of success, to classify cultural preferences and practices in view of distinct patterns, including an omnivorous one (e.g., Bennett et al., 1999; Sintas and Álvarez, 2002; Van Eijck, 1999a,b, 2001; Van Eijck et al., 2002; Van Rees et al., 1999; Van Rees and van Eijck, 2000). In general, their findings confirm the existence of an omnivorous group, which is usually small and which largely consists of highly educated people who were born after World War II. The emergence of this omnivorous taste pattern has been linked to broader societal changes during the second half of last century (see De Haan and Knulst, 2000; Van den Broek and de Haan, 2000; Peterson and Kern, 1996; Van Eijck, 1999a). More particularly, it has been pointed out that the rapid development of the leisure industry and the booming of the mass media, together with the democratisation of the educational system and an increased social mobility, resulted in a serious decrease in impact and legitimacy of the fine arts among the post-war generations.

In this article, we use this ‘post-Bourdieu debate’ as the overall framework for an exploration of patterns in cultural participation within Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region in Belgium that has a considerable political autonomy. The data stem from the annual survey among a representative sample of the Flemish population that the Department for Planning and Statistics (APS: Afdeling Planning en Statistiek) of the Flemish government has been carrying out since 1994. More particularly, we use the survey results of the years 2002 and 2003 (APS, 2002, 2003). The initial analysis is based on the 2002 dataset, whereas the 2003 dataset is employed in order to check the presented model. Given the overall questionnaire, the datasets do not contain information on the educational degree, the professional status or the income of the parents of the respondents. Neither do they offer enough information on the income of the respondents themselves. Since the yearly APS-survey is not conceived as a longitudinal panel design, it is also impossible to check for possible changes in cultural preferences between the pre-war and post-war age cohorts. Thus, we can examine age effects only as an indication of eventual generational changes in taste preferences. In the light of these constraints, we focus on the hypothesis that there is indeed a group of cultural omnivores within the Flemish population. We expect that this group will mainly consist of rather young and highly educated individuals. However, our analysis shows that one can discern two distinct patterns of omnivore taste within those who are under 45, according to the amount of educational capital of the respondents. This finding simultaneously confirms Bourdieu’s stress on the importance of educational capital for cultural participation and Peterson’s thesis that the younger age cohorts combine a taste for so-called high and low culture, ‘the arts’ and ‘the popular’.

In order to discern different patterns of cultural participation within the datasets, we use Latent Class Analysis. Instead of the common dichotomous participation variable approach, i.e., ‘did participate’ versus ‘didn’t participate’, we opt for a more nuanced approach with a trichotomous participation variable. In this way, we want to shed more light on the ‘zone of ambivalence’ in cultural practices, as did Sonnett (2004)—in a different way—in his study of people’s musical likes and dislikes. As has been mentioned,

the dataset on which we perform our baseline analysis is the annual population survey conducted in 2002 by the Flemish APS (Department of Planning and Statistics). The analysis yielded a six-cluster solution as the optimum. These six different patterns of cultural participation can be placed in three groups of two clusters each on the basis of the frequency and the mode of participation. Education and age are found to be the principal determinants for the differences between and within these cluster groups. When testing our model on the APS (2003) dataset, we obtain a similar outcome. This gives further evidence to the overall model, which was originally formulated on the basis of a latent class analysis of the APS 2000 and 2001 datasets (Vander Stichele and Laermans, 2004).

2. Research design and operationalisation

In an article in which they tested Peterson's findings with regard to reading behaviour, Van Rees et al. (1999) list a number of conditions that must be fulfilled when researching omnivorousness. First, this kind of research must involve a broad range of cultural activities: it hardly makes sense to use data related to only one cultural sector. Second, actual cultural practices and not only cultural preferences or tastes should be measured. Moreover, these measurements must be carried out on the level of the individual and not the level of the aggregate, as was the case in Peterson's initial articles (1992, 1993). Third, it is necessary to analyze the interrelationship between cultural classification and cultural stratification, and the way it changes through time. Finally, Van Rees et al. (1999) emphasize that the meaning of a label such as 'omnivore' or 'univore' is always limited to the number of cultural sectors analyzed on the one hand and to the number of cultural items within one sector on the other hand. We keep these cautions in mind during the analysis and interpretation of our findings.

The APS survey consists of an extensive battery of questions and value scales which cover a broad range of socio-cultural themes. For our analysis, we explore the data concerning leisure and leisure activities in view of possible patterns of cultural participation. More specifically, we use those variables that are related to participation in a series of legitimate and illegitimate cultural activities during the previous year. We restrict our analysis to the group of respondents between 18 and 79 years old in the APS (2002) dataset. After weighing for age and education, this group comprises 1408 respondents. In order to test the reliability of the cluster solution obtained by using the APS (2002) dataset, we repeat the analysis on the APS (2003) dataset. The latter consists of 1386 respondents between 18 and 79 years old after weighing for age and education.

In principle, cultural participation behaviour encompasses both public and private receptive practices, as well as active and interactive forms of cultural participation (Vander Stichele, 2003). Yet, the only variables in the APS survey measuring private receptive cultural participation concern television, which is not of much use for an analysis that takes the 'post-Bourdieu debate' as its starting point. Neither does the APS survey give insight into the active cultural participation activities of the respondents. We, therefore, only take into account the variables that can be related to receptive cultural participation behaviour in the public sphere in the strict sense of the word. Thus, the data regarding dining out or attending sporting events are excluded. For each of the selected variables, the respondents were asked how many times they had engaged in the cultural activity in question during the

previous year. The selected variables relate to the attendance of opera productions, classical music concerts, ballet and/or dance performances, theatre plays, visits to museums and/or exhibitions and/or galleries, as well as to the participation in folk and/or traditional music concerts, jazz and/or blues concerts, pop and/or rock concerts and the viewing of cinema movies. We assume, not without some hesitation (the reasons for which we will focus on in the concluding section) that the five cultural activities mentioned first can be classified as belonging to the world of the fine arts, whereas the other four forms of cultural participation may be regarded as more popular activities. This is, of course, a debatable classification: jazz concerts and movies are sometimes regarded as instances of ‘high culture’.

The response categories in the APS surveys range from ‘never’ over ‘once a year’ and ‘several times a year’ to ‘once a month’ and ‘several times a month’. For everybody who is acquainted with the results of empirical participation research, it will be no surprise that the last two categories, and for some variables even the last three response alternatives, hardly feature any respondents (see Table 1). We, therefore, combine the last three categories into the single category ‘several times a year up to several times a month’. Thus, we obtain for both datasets nine trichotomous ordinal variables suitable for analysis.

Questions can be raised concerning the interpretation of a response category as broad as the one we composed. However, the frequency distributions of Table 1 show that the majority of the respondents who fall in this new category do attend one of these activities several times a year but certainly not on a monthly basis. It is also debatable whether it is sound to keep the second response category as a separate one. Indeed, ‘once a year’ is very specific in comparison with the first and third category. Nevertheless, since we want to discern nuances in participation, we assume that it does make sense to hold on to the second response category.

In order to detect different patterns in cultural participation, Latent Class Analysis is one of the most appropriate ways to construct a latent typology based on a set of manifest variables with an ordinal measuring level (Van Rees et al., 1999; Vermunt, 1997). Used as a cluster method (Latent Class Cluster Analysis), the performance of this method of analysis is comparable to what a k-means cluster analysis does with variables of an interval level. Both methods discern clusters of people having common interests, values, characteristics

Table 1

Cultural participation frequency of the Flemish population between 18 and 79 years old in 2002 and 2003 (percentages)

	APS-2002					APS-2003				
	1 ^a	2 ^b	3 ^c	4 ^d	5 ^e	1 ^a	2 ^b	3 ^c	4 ^d	5 ^e
Opera	89.6	7.8	2.0	0.4	0.1	91.5	6.1	2.0	0.2	0.2
Classical music	63.3	17.4	16.4	1.9	1.1	68.5	16.7	12.7	1.5	0.6
Dance, ballet	77.7	15.9	6.0	0.3	0.1	79.3	14.5	6.0	0.0	0.2
Theatre plays	51.3	23.6	23.0	1.6	0.5	51.3	22.2	24.3	1.6	0.6
Museum, exhibitions, gallery	38.6	27.7	30.7	1.9	1.1	42.0	25.3	29.8	1.6	1.3
Folk, traditional music	72.2	20.6	6.7	0.5	0.0	79.0	15.4	5.5	0.2	0.0
Jazz, blues	83.7	11.0	4.8	0.4	0.1	86.8	8.7	4.1	0.2	0.1
Pop, rock	68.0	18.4	12.3	1.1	0.3	69.1	16.0	13.4	0.9	0.5
Cinema	38.6	14.8	31.2	9.3	6.2	40.4	14.3	31.5	8.9	5.0

^a‘Never’, ^b‘Once a year’, ^c‘Several times a year’, ^d‘Once a month’, and ^e‘Several times a month’.

or behavioural patterns (Vermunt and Magidson, 2000a; Vermunt and Magidson, 2002). We use Latent Gold as a program for our analysis in order to include covariates or explanatory variables during model estimation. With covariates, differences between the various latent classes can be described. Another advantage is that covariates reduce classification errors (Vermunt and Magidson, 2000b). Yet, the major advantage of this one-step procedure over a two-step procedure, in which an additional logit analysis is needed to assess the effect of the explanatory variables on the membership of a certain latent class, is that the former yields unbiased estimates of the covariate effects. On the contrary, a two-step procedure results in biased estimates of these effects, so that correction is necessary (Bolck et al., 2004).

We use the traditional background variables ‘sex’, ‘age’ and ‘education’ as explanatory categories. Socio-professional status is not used as an explanatory category because we observed that this variable does not have a significant effect when combined with the educational variable. The age variable consists of six categories: ‘18–24 years old’, ‘25–34 years old’, ‘35–44 years old’, ‘45–54 years old’, ‘55–64 years old’ and ‘65–79 years old’. The educational variable has three response categories: ‘low educational level’ (with a diploma of lower secondary education as the highest degree), ‘average educational level’ (=higher secondary education) and ‘high educational level’ (=education beyond secondary school).

3. Results

3.1. APS 2002

Table 2 summarizes the results of the estimated latent class models based on the APS (2002) dataset, with ‘sex’, ‘age’ and ‘education’ as the explanatory variables.

As a result of the high number of variables in our model, one of which (‘age’) has six response categories, we end up in a situation (‘sparse table’) in which the Likelihood Ratio Chi-square Fit Index (L^2) tends to be unreliable. Thus, the models appear to fit well with the data, whereas they actually do not. This is expressed by the p -values all being equal to 1, which indicates a good model fit. We, therefore, use the Bayes Information Criterion (BIC) as well as the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Consistent Akaike Information

Table 2
Test results of the estimated cluster models, covariates included (APS, 2002 data)

Model	L^2	BIC (L^2)	AIC (L^2)	CAIC (L^2)	d.f.	p -value
Cluster 1	11459.65	–5125488.13	–1405608.35	–5834022.13	708534	1.00
Cluster 2	9236.44	–5127617.09	–1407805.56	–5836138.09	708521	1.00
Cluster 3	8751.23	–5128008.04	–1408264.77	–5836516.04	708508	1.00
Cluster 4	8276.52	–5128388.50	–1408713.48	–5836883.50	708495	1.00
Cluster 5	8097.26	–5128473.51	–1408866.74	–5836955.51	708482	1.00
Cluster 6	7943.41	–5128533.11	–1408994.59	–5837002.11	708469	1.00
Cluster 7	7889.47	–5128492.79	–1409022.53	–5836948.79	708456	1.00
Cluster 8	7844.01	–5128444.01	–1409041.99	–5836887.01	708443	1.00

Criterion (CAIC) in order to evaluate the estimated models. These fit indices weigh both the fit and the parsimony of the estimated models. The smaller the BIC, the AIC or the CAIC value is, the better the model fits the data.

On the basis of these three Information Criteria, we opt for the six-class solution as the best fitting model. Indeed, this is the model solution with the lowest BIC and CAIC values, whereas the AIC would select models with more latent classes, which, consequently, are not as parsimonious. In order to observe whether a model with less than six classes could also be obtained when using the same dataset, we computed several models in which we allowed for local dependencies between the variables with the highest bivariate residuals. However, these newly estimated models do not differ much from the models without local dependencies. Since a similar analysis based on the APS-datasets from the 2000 and 2001 surveys (Vander Stichele and Laermans, 2004) also led to a six cluster solution and, as we will see further on in this article, we find a more or less identical solution using the APS (2003) dataset, we opt for the six cluster solution. As will be shown throughout the following sections, this model solution also results in sound theoretical interpretations.

Table 3 gives information on the different profiles of the six clusters. More particularly, the table states the conditional probabilities, given the membership of one of the six clusters, of going ‘never’, ‘once a year’ or ‘several times a year up to several times a month’ to a specific cultural activity. In addition, Table 4 presents the conditional probabilities of the membership of a certain cluster given a particular response category for the ‘sex’, ‘age’ and ‘education’ variables. This enables us to take into account the effects of these covariates on the cluster solution. Appendix A also mentions the different parameters and their significance level for every exploratory variable by cluster.

The first row of Table 3 shows the relative size of the six different clusters. Right below that row, we see the probability of the membership of a certain response category (frequency of participation) for every cluster, grouped per variable (cultural activity). For example, if one belongs to cluster 5, the probability of never going to the opera is 0.52. To interpret these probabilities, we compare them with the probabilities across clusters indicating the specific response category. Table 4 should be read inversely. The first line of this table is equivalent to the first line in Table 3 and mentions the relative size of the clusters. Next are the probabilities of the membership of a certain cluster, given the response category of the variable in question, shown for every explanatory variable. For example, the probability for a man to belong to cluster 1, when controlled for age and education, is 0.18. For the interpretation of these probabilities, a comparison is made with the ‘overall probability’ of belonging to the specific cluster.

Two clusters of Table 3 are made up of respondents who are never or hardly ever active in the cultural fields under investigation. Cluster 1, which groups 19% of all respondents, consists of Flemings who, certain exceptions notwithstanding, actually never participate. Most of the respondents of Cluster 2, to which 18% of the respondents belong, also hardly ever attend cultural events. However, unlike the first cluster, they do go to the cinema. They have a chance of .59 of going to the movies several times a year, while their chance to do this once a year is .21. The effect of the background variables on the membership of clusters 1 and 2 (see Table 4) show that there are no significant sex differences. Yet, there are significant age and educational differences between both clusters (see Appendix A). Thus,

Table 3

Conditional probabilities of participating ‘Never’, ‘Once a year’ or ‘Several times a year to several times a month’ in a certain cultural activity, given that one belongs to one of the six clusters (APS, 2002 data)

Profile	Cluster 1 ^a	Cluster 2 ^b	Cluster 3 ^c	Cluster 4 ^d	Cluster 5 ^e	Cluster 6 ^f
Cluster size	0.19	0.18	0.22	0.20	0.13	0.08
Opera						
Never	1.00	1.00	0.99	0.98	0.52	0.59
Once a year	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.35	0.31
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.10
Mean	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.62	0.51
Classical concert						
Never	1.00	0.95	0.72	0.49	0.10	0.09
Once a year	0.00	0.05	0.22	0.31	0.26	0.24
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.20	0.64	0.67
Mean	0.00	0.05	0.34	0.71	1.54	1.58
Contemporary dance/ballet						
Never	1.00	0.95	0.77	0.81	0.44	0.37
Once a year	0.00	0.05	0.19	0.17	0.35	0.36
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.03	0.21	0.27
Mean	0.00	0.05	0.27	0.22	0.77	0.91
Theatre play						
Never	0.97	0.79	0.39	0.39	0.14	0.09
Once a year	0.03	0.18	0.34	0.34	0.29	0.25
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.04	0.28	0.27	0.57	0.66
Mean	0.03	0.25	0.89	0.88	1.43	1.57
Museum						
Never	0.84	0.70	0.22	0.22	0.06	0.03
Once a year	0.15	0.24	0.37	0.37	0.26	0.19
Several times a year to several times a month	0.02	0.05	0.41	0.41	0.68	0.77
Mean	0.18	0.35	1.18	1.20	1.61	1.74
Folk or traditional music concert						
Never	0.96	0.94	0.73	0.60	0.49	0.32
Once a year	0.04	0.06	0.23	0.30	0.35	0.39
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.09	0.15	0.29
Mean	0.04	0.06	0.31	0.49	0.66	0.97
Jazz or blues concert						
Never	1.00	1.00	0.96	0.72	0.67	0.33
Once a year	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.21	0.24	0.33
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.09	0.34

Table 3 (Continued)

Profile	Cluster 1 ^a	Cluster 2 ^b	Cluster 3 ^c	Cluster 4 ^d	Cluster 5 ^e	Cluster 6 ^f
<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>0.34</i>	<i>0.42</i>	<i>1.01</i>
Pop or rock concert						
Never	1.00	0.70	0.97	0.22	0.81	0.02
Once a year	0.00	0.26	0.03	0.45	0.18	0.19
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.32	0.01	0.80
<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>0.33</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>1.10</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>1.78</i>
Cinema						
Never	0.97	0.20	0.56	0.05	0.25	0.01
Once a year	0.03	0.21	0.21	0.12	0.22	0.06
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.59	0.23	0.83	0.53	0.92
<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>1.39</i>	<i>0.67</i>	<i>1.78</i>	<i>1.28</i>	<i>1.91</i>

^aOlder non-participants', ^bYounger non-participants', ^cIncidental art participants', ^dOmnivore incidental art participants', ^eTraditional art participants', and ^fOmnivore art participants'.

cluster 1 mainly consists of older (45–79) people and people with a lower education, whereas cluster 2 is largely made up of respondents with a lower and average education, from the younger age cohorts. We, therefore, give cluster 1 the label 'older non-participants' and label cluster 2 as grouping 'younger non-participants'.

Table 4

Conditional probabilities of belonging to the different clusters given every response category of the variables within the model (APS, 2002 data)

Probability means	Cluster 1 ^a	Cluster 2 ^b	Cluster 3 ^c	Cluster 4 ^d	Cluster 5 ^e	Cluster 6 ^f
Overall probability	0.19	0.18	0.22	0.20	0.13	0.08
Covariates						
Sex						
Male	0.18	0.19	0.21	0.22	0.11	0.08
Female	0.19	0.17	0.22	0.18	0.16	0.08
Age						
18–24	0.00	0.32	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.17
25–34	0.01	0.34	0.02	0.44	0.03	0.15
35–44	0.09	0.31	0.14	0.24	0.10	0.11
45–54	0.22	0.07	0.32	0.09	0.24	0.05
55–64	0.28	0.01	0.45	0.00	0.26	0.00
65–79	0.50	0.00	0.34	0.00	0.15	0.00
Educational level						
Low	0.33	0.20	0.28	0.09	0.08	0.03
Moderate	0.08	0.22	0.17	0.31	0.13	0.10
High	0.03	0.09	0.15	0.32	0.26	0.16

^aOlder non-participants', ^bYounger non-participants', ^cIncidental art participants', ^dOmnivore incidental art participants', ^eTraditional art participants', and ^fOmnivore art participants'.

Next to these two clusters of non-participants, we can position clusters 3 and 4. The third cluster of Table 3, to which about 22% of the sampling population belongs, consists of respondents who participate only to a small extent in legitimate culture. They hardly ever attend opera, classical concerts or dance performances. Although they have a relatively high chance to go to a museum or a theatre play more than once a year, they have a higher probability of participating only once a year when compared to clusters 5 and 6. Regarding more popular cultural activities, we observe that the respondents of cluster 3 seldom attend folk or traditional music concerts and never go to jazz or blues, pop or rock concerts. About half of them do go to the cinema, but when compared to other clusters, again only a small part of this cluster goes more than once a year. Except for the participation in more popular cultural activities, the overall profile of cluster 3 is quite similar to that of cluster 4, which groups 20% of the respondents. This cluster is characterised by the not-so-frequent participation of its respondents in legitimate cultural activities on the one hand, their rather frequent participation in the more popular cultural genres on the other hand. Similar to the members of cluster 3, they attend high cultural activities such as classical music concerts, plays and museums more often on a yearly basis. Also, they almost never go to the opera or to dance or ballet performances. Folk or traditional music concerts and jazz or blues concerts are attended by only a minority of them: the probability of attending these kinds of musical events is .39 and .27, respectively. Moreover, this minority turns out to go no more than once a year to this type of concerts. Members of cluster 4 do attend pop or rock concerts, and cinema attendance is also very popular among them.

When looking more closely at clusters 3 and 4, and taking the background variables into consideration, we do not observe significant sex differences but notice significant age differences. Cluster 3 mainly consists of older people between 45 and 79 years old, whereas the majority of cluster 4 is made up of respondents from the younger age cohorts. Although cluster 3 mainly groups lower educated people, this difference in education is not significant. In cluster 4, however, there are significantly more people with a moderate to high educational level. That the younger respondents of cluster 4 are more highly educated than the older ones of cluster 3, who have more or less the same arts participation profile, is most likely due to the effect of the post-war democratisation of schooling and the prolonging of compulsory education. Since both clusters only participate on a yearly basis in a limited number of high cultural activities, we can label them '*incidental art participants*'. However, cluster 4 has a more encompassing pattern of cultural participation than cluster 3 since the members lean to high as well as to low cultural activities. Consequently, we give this cluster the label '*omnivore incidental art participants*'. Following Bennett et al. (1999), it is also possible to speak of 'low-brow omnivores': people who combine a rather limited interest in the fine arts with a more outspoken interest in the popular, often 'commercial' cultural genres.

The two remaining clusters 5 and 6, to which belong 13 and 8% of the respondents, respectively, can be characterised as high-culture-minded. Indeed, the probability of attending a high cultural activity 'more than once a year up to more than once a month' is much higher with both clusters than in the other ones. Yet, the same goes for cluster 6 with regard to popular cultural activities. In contrast to the respondents of cluster 5, who hardly ever go to jazz or blues concerts and pop or rock concerts, the participation frequency in cluster 6 is also high for these activities. We also notice this discrepancy when observing

the frequencies of cinema attendance. Thus, cluster 5 can be seen as almost exclusively oriented towards high or legitimate culture, whereas the respondents of cluster 6 frequently participate in high as well as in low cultural activities. We again observe that the older age groups (45–79 years old) are significantly over-represented in the cluster that is characterized by a participation pattern that is less oriented towards popular culture (see [Appendix A](#)). Conversely, the younger age groups are significantly over-represented in cluster 6. [Table 4](#) shows that there is an over-representation of highly educated people in both clusters. Although we cannot empirically prove it on the basis of our data, we assume that the older respondents of cluster 5 were still raised with the idea of *Bildung*, which was the standard within Flemish secondary and higher education until the 1960s. Consequently, we label these respondents as ‘*traditional art participants*’ or, following [Peterson and Kern \(1996\)](#), as ‘highbrow snobs’. Within this group, there are more women than men, although this difference is just barely significant. The respondents within the remaining cluster 6 have a cultural participation profile that is similar to that of the ‘cultural omnivores’ as described by Richard Peterson. We, therefore, attach to this group the label ‘*omnivore art participants*’, for which we do not find a significant sex difference. Another possible label is offered by [Bennett et al. \(1999\)](#), who speak of ‘highbrow omnivores’.

3.2. APS 2003

In order to increase the reliability of the cluster solution that has just been presented, we repeat the latent class analysis for the [APS \(2003\)](#) dataset. As has already been mentioned and as is shown in [Table 5](#), the six-cluster model again provides the best solution. It is the model with the lowest BIC and CAIC values, whereas the AIC points to a more complex cluster solution. Besides, this six-class model is fully consistent with the six-class solution we have just discussed, as well as with the solutions we found when analyzing the APS 2000 and 2001 datasets ([Vander Stichele and Laermans, 2004](#)). Although the relative probabilities slightly change, we still find the same six cultural subgroups within the 2003 sample of 18–79 years old Flemings. Moreover, we observe almost all the mentioned significant effects of sex, age and education (see [Appendix B](#)). The only significant effect we do not observe is the educational effect within the cluster of ‘omnivore incidental arts participants’. In line with the [APS \(2002\)](#) analysis, people with a moderate to high educational degree are over-represented within this cluster. Yet,

Table 5
Test results of the estimated cluster models, covariates included (APS, 2003 data)

Model	L^2	BIC (L^2)	AIC (L^2)	CAIC (L^2)	d.f.	p-value
Cluster 1	10336.75	–5108881.64	–1406731.25	–5817415.64	708534	1.00
Cluster 2	8411.28	–5110713.18	–1408630.72	–5819234.18	708521	1.00
Cluster 3	7923.71	–5111106.83	–1409092.29	–5819614.83	708508	1.00
Cluster 4	7628.42	–5111308.19	–1409361.58	–5819803.19	708495	1.00
Cluster 5	7480.54	–5111362.14	–1409483.46	–5819844.14	708482	1.00
Cluster 6	7339.79	–5111408.96	–1409598.21	–5819877.96	708469	1.00
Cluster 7	7263.45	–5111391.38	–1409648.55	–5819847.38	708456	1.00
Cluster 8	7202.80	–5111358.11	–1409683.20	–5819801.11	708443	1.00

the effect is not significant in the APS (2003) dataset. For that matter, we did not find this significant educational effect in our analysis of the APS 2000 and 2001 datasets (Vander Stichele and Laermans, 2004) either. Besides, it is just barely significant in the APS (2002) dataset (Tables 6 and 7).

Table 6

Conditional probabilities of participating ‘Never’, ‘Once a year’ or ‘Several times a year to several times a month’ in a certain cultural activity, given that one belongs to one of the six clusters (APS, 2003 data)

Profile	Cluster 1 ^a	Cluster 2 ^b	Cluster 3 ^c	Cluster 4 ^d	Cluster 5 ^e	Cluster 6 ^f
Cluster size	0.24	0.17	0.18	0.24	0.09	0.08
Opera						
Never	0.99	1.00	0.98	0.99	0.51	0.61
Once a year	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.32	0.28
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.11
Mean	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.65	0.49
Classical concert						
Never	0.95	0.96	0.76	0.56	0.13	0.13
Once a year	0.05	0.04	0.19	0.29	0.27	0.27
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.16	0.60	0.60
Mean	0.05	0.04	0.30	0.60	1.48	1.47
Contemporary dance/ballet						
Never	0.95	1.00	0.89	0.71	0.34	0.40
Once a year	0.05	0.00	0.10	0.23	0.36	0.36
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.30	0.24
Mean	0.05	0.00	0.11	0.35	0.96	0.84
Theatre play						
Never	0.82	0.84	0.36	0.35	0.12	0.13
Once a year	0.14	0.13	0.30	0.30	0.24	0.25
Several times a year to several times a month	0.04	0.03	0.34	0.35	0.64	0.62
Mean	0.21	0.18	0.97	1.00	1.52	1.49
Museum						
Never	0.72	0.73	0.27	0.28	0.05	0.03
Once a year	0.21	0.21	0.32	0.32	0.19	0.15
Several times a year to several times a month	0.07	0.06	0.41	0.40	0.75	0.82
Mean	0.34	0.33	1.14	1.13	1.70	1.79
Folk or traditional music concert						
Never	1.00	0.98	0.70	0.73	0.51	0.47
Once a year	0.00	0.02	0.23	0.22	0.32	0.33
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.06	0.18	0.20

Table 6 (Continued)

Profile	Cluster 1 ^a	Cluster 2 ^b	Cluster 3 ^c	Cluster 4 ^d	Cluster 5 ^e	Cluster 6 ^f
<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>0.36</i>	<i>0.33</i>	<i>0.67</i>	<i>0.73</i>
Jazz or blues concert						
Never	1.00	0.98	0.87	0.82	0.83	0.41
Once a year	0.00	0.02	0.10	0.13	0.13	0.26
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.33
<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.00</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>0.15</i>	<i>0.22</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>0.92</i>
Pop or rock concert						
Never	1.00	0.77	0.88	0.27	0.97	0.11
Once a year	0.00	0.19	0.11	0.35	0.03	0.28
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.38	0.00	0.62
<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>0.27</i>	<i>0.14</i>	<i>1.11</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>1.51</i>
Cinema						
Never	0.97	0.28	0.50	0.04	0.21	0.06
Once a year	0.03	0.23	0.22	0.11	0.21	0.14
Several times a year to several times a month	0.00	0.49	0.27	0.84	0.58	0.80
<i>Mean</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>1.21</i>	<i>0.77</i>	<i>1.80</i>	<i>1.36</i>	<i>1.74</i>

^a‘Older non-participants’, ^b‘Younger non-participants’, ^c‘Incidental art participants’, ^d‘Omnivore incidental art participants’, ^e‘Traditional art participants’, and ^f‘Omnivore art participants’.

Table 7

Conditional probabilities of belonging to the different clusters given every response category of the variables within the model (APS, 2003 data)

Probability means	Cluster 1 ^a	Cluster 2 ^b and	Cluster 3 ^c	Cluster 4 ^d	Cluster 5 ^e	Cluster 6 ^f
Overall probability	0.24	0.17	0.18	0.24	0.09	0.08
Covariates						
Sex						
Male	0.21	0.20	0.22	0.23	0.06	0.09
Female	0.27	0.14	0.14	0.25	0.12	0.07
Age						
18–24	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.65	0.00	0.09
25–34	0.01	0.35	0.03	0.47	0.01	0.13
35–44	0.08	0.28	0.17	0.32	0.05	0.11
45–54	0.22	0.12	0.34	0.09	0.12	0.10
55–64	0.44	0.03	0.31	0.02	0.19	0.01
65–79	0.66	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.17	0.00
Educational level						
Low	0.46	0.17	0.18	0.13	0.06	0.01
Moderate	0.10	0.23	0.20	0.33	0.08	0.06
High	0.03	0.09	0.15	0.34	0.17	0.23

^a‘Older non-participants’, ^b‘Younger non-participants’, ^c‘Incidental art participants’, ^d‘Omnivore incidental art participants’, ^e‘Traditional art participants’, and ^f‘Omnivore art participants’.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In Fig. 1, we summarize the findings from the above analysis of the APS (2002, 2003) datasets and from a previously published exploration of the APS 2000 and 2001 surveys (Vander Stichele and Laermans, 2004). The variables ‘education’ and ‘age’ play a decisive role since the six clusters can be divided into three groups of two clusters. The three cluster groups differ from each other on the basis of *frequency of participation*, with educational level being the explanatory variable. The two clusters within each of the three groups show a different *participation mode*; these differences in participation behaviour are explained by the age variable.

It comes as no surprise that the frequency of participation increases with *the level of education*. Indeed, as was already noted in the introduction, nearly all empirical research on participation in the arts shows that education is one of the main determinants. The greater one’s amount of educational capital, the higher one’s chances to participate in high-cultural events and the higher one’s frequency of participation. This is confirmed by our data and in line with Bourdieu’s (1984 [1979], 1989) stress on cultural capital. However, our findings do not support the theoretical speculation, formulated by Van den Broek and de Haan (2000) and Laermans (2002a) that cultural omnivores will participate less frequently in the arts. The idea behind this hypothesis is double. On the one hand, the higher educated omnivores often have a stressful professional career which, certainly in combination with a family life, does not leave much leisure time; on the other hand, the sparse free time can be divided over a vast array of cultural activities since omnivores are oriented towards the arts as well as towards more popular genres. Therefore, one may

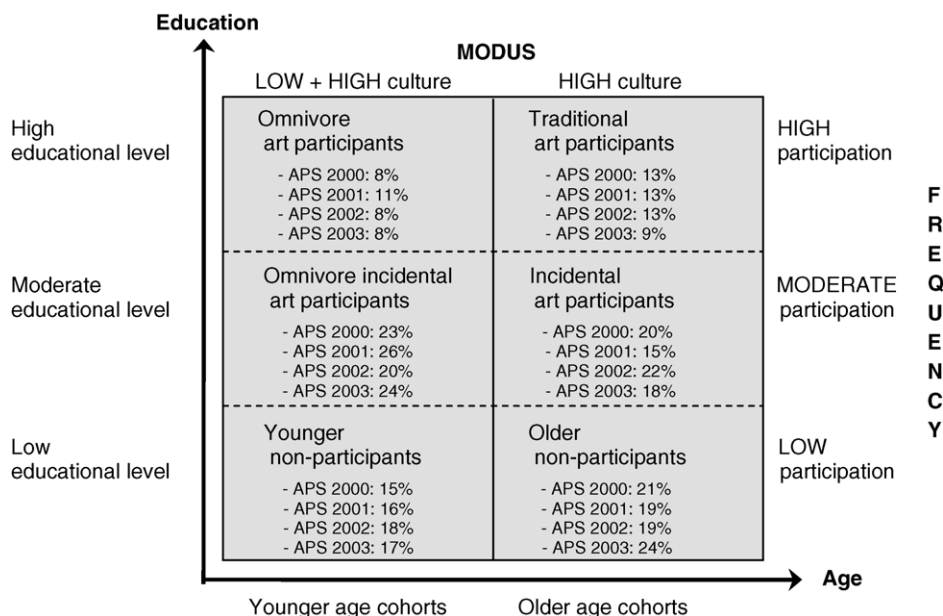


Fig. 1. Explanatory model of the cultural participation patterns in Flanders.

expect of the prototypical omnivore—highly educated, under 45, culturally broadminded—a broad but sporadic participation pattern. In other words, it can be expected that the tension between a limited free time and a broad taste or lifestyle transforms omnivores into cultural hoppers: ‘a little bit here, a little bit there, but never a lot of the same’. Our results argue against this expectation. A higher educational level goes hand in hand with an increase in the number of activities as well as in the frequency of participation. This increase not only holds for the older cohorts within the high-cultural cluster group (labelled ‘traditional art participants’), but also for the younger ones who have the broadest cultural participation pattern. The latter combine—to take up Bourdieu’s terminology once again—legitimate with illegitimate cultural activities, and thus correspond to the image of the omnivore. This brings us to the second diverging factor of our explanatory model. Within each of the three cluster groups, two clusters can be distinguished according to a difference in *participation mode*. More particularly, they differ from each other by the range of activities in which its members participate. This difference can be attributed to the *age* variable. If the older clusters are culturally active, they almost exclusively tend towards the fine arts, whereas the younger clusters are not only oriented towards high culture but also show a marked interest for different forms of popular culture. It seems sound to link this age-related difference in cultural participation to a different ‘cultural programming’ of the cohorts that grew up since the mid-1950s (De Haan and Knulst, 2000). Due to the breakthrough of mass entertainment and different forms of youth (sub-)culture, the democratisation of education and ‘the anti-authoritarian mood’ of the 1960s and the 1970s, the traditional notion of *Bildung*—‘participation in the fine arts refines one’s mind and soul . . .’—decreased in legitimacy and began to become obsolete (compare Martin, 1981). A primarily relativistic view of art and culture became influential, in which more popular cultural activities were acceptable if they could be brought in line with the new ethos of personal authenticity and self-development.

Indeed, the changing societal context not only affected cultural practice as such but also resulted in a broader cultural turn. Therefore, the cohorts who grew up during the second-half of the 20th century cherish values that are different from those of older people. Thus, Ronald Inglehart (1990, 1997) found that the younger cohorts give much more priority to post-materialistic values than the older ones. Gerhard Schulze (1992) also detected a different attitude to life amongst the younger age groups. Unlike the older age groups, their lifestyle is highly focused on self-experience and self-development via a broad range of activities. For that matter, when distinguishing distinct ‘cultural milieus’, Schulze also finds age and education to be the determining variables. These and other studies give plausibility to the idea that the age-related difference in participation mode which we discussed above points to a more general generational difference. Of course, a sound empirical test of this hypothesis is only possible with a longitudinal panel survey.

By way of conclusion, we return to our empirical findings once again. They clearly show the existence of some groups within the active Flemish cultural public, which can be labelled ‘omnivore’. We deliberately speak of ‘some groups’ because the detected cultural participation patterns do not permit the conclusion that the omnivore participants belong to a fixed group of people who distinguish themselves univocally from all the other cultural participants. Rather, cultural omnivorousness seems to be an orientation towards what is traditionally considered to be high and low culture, which can manifest itself in different ways and various gradations. Some people combine a principal orientation to popular

culture with high-cultural activities, while the cultural interest of others is the other way round. The number of attended cultural activities and the frequency of participation also fluctuate. For these reasons, only a rather small group could be labelled as ‘omnivore art participants’, whereas a larger group was described in terms of ‘omnivore incidental art participants’. In a comparable way, [Sonnett \(2004\)](#) distinguishes ‘omnivores’ from ‘quasi-omnivores’, depending on the extension of ‘the zone of ambivalence’ in which one operates. With the latter expression, he points to the degree of mixed feelings one has towards musical genres and, by extension, towards different cultural domains and activities. The more mixed feelings one has regarding a certain cultural domain, the more we may assume that the person will not participate all too often in this particular sphere. Another interesting link is offered by Bernard [Lahire’s \(2003, 2004\)](#) proposal to rethink the concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘disposition’ in a less fixed and rigid way than Bourdieu did. Lahire argues that dispositions are stronger or weaker according to the context in which they were acquired or in which they are actualised. He thus opens up Bourdieu’s views on socialization and agency for ‘new’ phenomena, such as cultural omnivorousness and the fact that this omnivorousness comes in different ways and degrees.

Last but not least, in line with the pertinent remarks of [Van Rees et al. \(1999\)](#), we would like to emphasize that our definition of omnivorousness only applies to the cultural activities that were used in the analysis. Since there are other relevant cultural activities that we did not include, the results may differ to a greater or lesser extent if such practices are indeed taken into account. Examples of relevant activities that were not selected in our analysis—as they are not present in the APS questionnaire—are the attendance of operetta and circus productions, as well as processions or parades. These are more popular cultural activities that probably mainly attract an older public. One can also think of high-cultural activities which were not included, such as literary events. Moreover, most of the variables we did use are quite general and may include a broad range of cultural activities, both legitimate and illegitimate. Thus, the question concerning the attendance of plays can be linked to high school plays as well as to productions of the most reputed theatre companies. In a similar way, respondents can understand the notion of museum visit as applying as well to art museums as to non-art museums, such as scientific museums. It is immediately clear that the related differences in symbolic value of specific cultural activities, events or institutions cannot be taken into account when one has to work with catch-all categories. Finally, we only observed differences in the receptive consumption of cultural manifestations or events outside the domestic sphere. The mere fact that a considerable part of the Flemish population hardly shows any cultural participation behaviour worth the name is not to say that they are insensitive to culture as such. In addition to receptive cultural participation in the public space, there are many other ways, both active and receptive, to meet one’s cultural needs. For these kinds of cultural activity, one does not necessarily have to leave the house or the broader private sphere.

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remarks encouraged us to revise the article in order to improve it on both the theoretical and the methodological level.

Appendix A

Table A.1

Logit parameters and Wald-tests for significance (APS, 2002 dataset)

Covariates	Cluster 1 ^a	Cluster 2 ^b	Cluster 3 ^c	Cluster 4 ^d	Cluster 5 ^e	Cluster 6 ^f	Wald	<i>p</i> -value
Sex	−0.10 (0.19)	−0.13 (0.20)	0.01 (0.19)	−0.25 (0.19)	0.56 (0.20)**	−0.09 (0.23)	9.33	9.70E-02
Age	1.20 (0.14)**	−1.05 (0.12)**	1.02 (0.12)**	−1.17 (0.14)**	1.00 (0.11)**	−1.00 (0.14)**	123.07	7.00E-25
Educational level	−1.04 (0.17)**	−0.66 (0.15)**	−0.12 (0.14)	0.34 (0.13)**	0.87 (0.13)**	0.61 (0.15)**	157.07	4.20E-32

^aOlder non-participants', ^bYounger non-participants', ^cIncidental art participants', ^dOmnivore incidental art-participants', ^eTraditional art participants', and ^fOmnivore art participants'. **p* < .05 and ***p* < .001.

Appendix B

Table B.1

Logit parameters and Wald-tests for significance (APS, 2003 dataset)

Covariates	Cluster 1 ^a	Cluster 2 ^b	Cluster 3 ^c	Cluster 4 ^d	Cluster 5 ^e	Cluster 6 ^f	Wald	<i>p</i> -value
Sex	0.16 (0.23)	−0.39 (0.22)	−0.38 (0.23)	0.00 (0.21)	1.05 (0.25)**	−0.44 (0.25)	24.21	2.00E-04
Age	1.19 (0.19)**	−0.96 (0.14)**	0.57 (0.12)**	−1.31 (0.18)**	1.19 (0.16)**	−0.68 (0.16)**	93.86	1.00E-18
Educational level	−1.30 (0.20)**	−0.64 (0.16)**	−0.12 (0.15)	0.08 (0.15)	0.81 (0.17)**	1.17 (0.22)**	133.20	5.00E-27

^aOlder non-participants', ^bYounger non-participants', ^cIncidental art participants', ^dOmnivore incidental art-participants', ^eTraditional art participants', and ^fOmnivore art participants'. **p* < .05. and ***p* < .001.

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